

# THE KELLERMONICON

by

**KELLERMAN**

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and

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**a robotic condom**

**(for FDL)**

**Gerald lived with his parents and had very little sexual experience. One day he saw an internet advertisement for a new product from Japan: a robotic condom. In this device Gerald saw the potential for a new era of solo carnal pleasures, a welcome change from the funk he'd found himself in of late. Carefully, he ordered it while his parents went out for cocktails and arranged for it to be delivered to the address of an abandoned gas station.**

**One week later it arrived. Under cover of darkness and disguised as a box of school supplies, Gerald brought the Japanese robotic condom home and unwrapped it in his room. As soon as he opened the box, he was struck at once with the sadness in the eyes of the robotic condom. Gerald felt as if he could see into the very soul of the creature, and realized suddenly the oneness of all things.**

**Overwhelmed with regret, compassion, and bittersweet joy, Gerald released the robotic condom into the wild. Deep within his heart, Gerald hoped that the robotic condom would not be corrupted by the folly of men.**

**Within 48 hours, Gerald forgot that any of this had happened. He remembered it only once, nine years later, as he stared through the window of a deli.**

**“Has he tried meditation?”**

**“Yes.”**

**“Well,” said the therapist thoughtfully, “when God opens a window...you have to break down a door. Make that lemonade, and make it sing.”**

**Lauren drove home, more exasperated than before. They got fast food fried chicken and she, Stevey, and Daniel sat around the dinner table that night, eating in silence. The tension was suffocating. Eventually, Lauren excused Stevey so he could go play. He went to his room and repeatedly stabbed the wall with his head, as per his usual night-time routine.**

**Back in the dining room, Lauren broke down in tears, and fell into Daniel’s arms.**

**“Oh boy, this thing with Stevey is really bothering you, huh?” he asked.**

**“Yes, it’s just...he can’t communicate, and there’s always the risk he’ll hurt other kids, or anyone, and I just don’t know what to do with him.”**

**He held her shoulders and looked deeply into her eyes.**

**“Listen. Stevey is going to be fine. All kids have their problems, and they all get through them, one way or another. You just have to let him figure things out for himself.”**

**“I just don’t see how...”**

**“It’s not for you to see. He’ll know, he’ll find his way, when the time is right.”**

**“Are you sure?”**

**“Sure I’m sure. Trust me, that kid is just waiting to blossom. He could be a great leader, I can just feel it! A real dynamo! I bet he’ll become President!”**

**Lauren, finally feeling heard, hugged Daniel tight, and as her tears dried, she smiled. They moved onto the couch for a nice snuggle. But nothing more, because things didn’t go so well the last time.**

**-----**

**A few days later, Daniel tried to teach Stevey how to wrestle and was stabbed to death.**

**Thirty years later, in a landslide vote, Stevey was elected President.**

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Stevey's head began to vibrate rapidly and emit a shrill sound.

"Oh, honey, it's okay, don't cry," she said, hoping that this was the correct response, since she wasn't really sure if what he was doing was crying. Stevey's head stopped vibrating and the shrill sound lowered an octave.

To placate the possibly upset child, Lauren drove him to the ice cream shop. He pointed, as usual, to Rocky Road, and she ordered him a heaping two scoops on a cone. He smeared the frosty treat onto both sides of his narrow, silvery head. Again the shrill noise sounded, followed by a couple of unusual beeps.

Stevey ran to give the ice cream shop clerk a hug and shanked his left leg. The man screamed and ran to the back room to find something to stop the bleeding. Lauren took Stevey by the hand and, panicked, pulled him outside and drove away, throwing the money onto the floor as she left.

One week later, Lauren was driving Stevey to the family therapist. He came very highly recommended. They pulled their luxury sports utility vehicle into the parking garage next to the large brick building and, holding hands, passed through the gilt-framed doorway.

Soon they were sitting on a maroon faux-leather couch.

"What's the problem, folks?" asked the therapist, a scrawny man with a wispy red mullet and matching beard.

"Stevey keeps hurting people, but I don't think he means to do it," Lauren said, exasperated.

"Lots of children have trouble expressing their needs, and so act out as a way to get attention."

"With Stevey, it's just that his head is a giant knife."

"I see."

The therapist walked around Stevey several times, apparently examining him. Finally, he sat back down and stared deeply at the spot where Stevey's eyes would be.

"Stevey, do you ever dream of transforming into sausages?"

Stevey said nothing.

"Have you ever dreamed of eating a bee, like a steak?"

Still the boy said nothing.

"Do you feel misunderstood at school?"

Stevey began to move in a way that vaguely resembled a pantomime of a person sobbing, only with a certain mechanical aspect to it.

"I'm going to write Stevey a prescription," said the therapist.

"He can't take pills," said Lauren, "he doesn't have a mouth."

forging ahead

a wealthy businessman neglects his son

and enjoys going hunting for quails

he spends time with his son

only once

he takes his son hunting for quails

the businessman grows old and dies

the businessman's son grows bitter

the businessman reincarnates as a quail

the businessman's son unknowingly shoots his father

as an outlet for stress

and as a way to relive one happy memory

the businessman reincarnates as a quail again

this repeats indefinitely

## **Mrs. O'Hare**

**When I was 7**

**I used to visit Mrs. O'Hare**

**she was old and lived in a little brown house**

**down the street**

**she had poofy white hair**

**and wore big thick black glasses**

**when it was hot in the summer**

**she'd give me big purple popsicles**

**we talked about what it was like to be a kid**

**and the differences between then and now**

**she told me about how her grandma**

**used to sew her dresses**

**I told her about which videogames**

**were my favorites**

## **Poor Little Knife Child**

"Daniel, I'm worried about Stevey," Lauren said, a crease in her brow about a mile deep.

"Boys will be boys, hon," Daniel replied with a yawn, flipping lackadaisically through the Holiday Gift Catalog. Lauren frowned at him.

"That's what you always say! Stevey is not like other boys! He's not like other children at all! He hurts people!"

"Tosh," Daniel replied, matter-of-factly. Lauren looked out the window.

Stevey was in the backyard playing with Rexnard, their beloved family dog. Rexnard the Saint Bernard. Rexnard leapt up to give Stevey a big doggy hug, and was immediately lacerated across the chest by Stevey's head as the boy leaned in to nuzzle him. Rexnard ran away yelping. Deep within her bosom, Lauren knew there was no hope of catching him. Like so many things in her life, that dog would leave and would never be seen again.

As Stevey sat down on the lawn in the lotus-position, preparing for his usual meditation at times like these, Lauren turned away from the window. Daniel was now looking at pin-up photographs of German U-Boats anthropomorphized to resemble buxom women.

"Men," Lauren sighed.

Summer faded into fall, and school time arrived. The first day of first grade was at hand. Lauren did not look forward to it. Kindergarten had been bad enough.

She knelt in front of Stevey and straightened his little bow-tie.

"You be good now," she said "you're gonna be momma's good little boy today!" She hoped her voice was encouraging.

Stevey just stared back at her, faceless. At least, she assumed he was staring.

Three hours later she received a phone call, telling her to come to the school right away. Stevey had accidentally lodged his head in his teacher's desk. The school had to call the fire department.

On the drive home, Lauren tried to break the awkward silence.

"How are you feeling, honey?"

Stevey just sat there.

"I know you're upset. I mean, I guess you are. But it's okay," she said, hoping it sounded sincere, "it'll be okay. You just need to develop those motor skills. Don't let your head get near anything."

He never did tell anyone what had happened. Mrs. Rosencrantz never spoke about it. Neither of them saw the men in suits again. Danny never stopped watching monster movies. Mrs. Rosencrantz, finding she now had extra space in her garden, planted hydrangeas.



“Danny Gets His Ass Kicked by a Sunflower” - Copyright 2017 by KELLERMAN

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she told me she used to play hide and seek  
I told her I loved that game

she said summer was her favorite season  
I said it was mine too

she said her favorite candy was lollipops  
I told her mine were chocolate

she asked if I had any girlfriends  
and laughed when I got mad and said no

she said she used to have boyfriends  
and asked if I wanted to see them

she took me to the basement  
and opened up the big boxes

after that I stopped visiting Mrs. O'Hare  
except on the really hot days  
when no one else had any purple popsicles

## **Piggyback Ride Through Time and Space**

**I am eight years old. I am at a picnic. It is our family reunion. I am wearing a green sweatshirt.**

**The other children and I play hide and seek, and hopscotch, and tag. It is great fun.**

**Uncle Bart comes over to me. He has a big, fluffy moustache and is wearing overalls.**

**"Hey, sport," he asks me, "how about a piggyback ride?"**

**"Yeah!" I scream, and he lifts me up upon his shoulders. I take his baseball cap and wear it.**

**He runs forward as I hold on tight.**

**Suddenly everything becomes a blur; the ground, sky, and sunlight stretch out into infinity.**

**Moments later I am forty-five years old. I am in front of my workplace.**

**It is a multinational advertising firm. It is a skyscraper in New York City.**

**I am wearing my usual suit and tie. I am sitting on the sidewalk.**

**Underneath me is Uncle Bart's shattered skeleton.**

**"MRRRRGGGGPPPPHHHH!" the sunflower grunted, from what, in the blur of motion, Danny thought was a small slit for a mouth. It didn't appear to have eyes.**

**The sunflower's assault went on for quite some time, and Danny could feel small cuts, like paper cuts, being sliced onto his face. He struggled to push the sunflower back, to no avail. Eventually, Danny passed out.**

**When he awoke, several men in suits were assisting Mrs. Rosencrantz back to her house, and helping Danny up. The sunflower was gone. There were still cuts all over his face. A man was treating them with gauze and, Danny could tell by the smell, antiseptic.**

**"Where...where's the...?"**

**"Just stay calm, son," the man said.**

**"What happened...? Where is it?"**

**"Don't ask questions. You're not to talk about what you've seen here today. Sign this paper. That's your agreement not to talk about it, to anyone, for any reason."**

**Danny, dazed, did as he was asked.**

**"Is she okay?"**

**"Your neighbor is fine. She'll be okay. Don't worry. We've taken care of everything."**

**"Wait...wait...just...just tell me...just what exactly happened?!"**

**"You got your ass kicked by a sunflower," the man calmly replied.**

**In the movies Danny had seen, the mysterious government agents, the "men in black," showed up, cleaned up the alien or supernatural messes, and were gone. Sometimes, they erased the memories of those who'd seen them, or coerced people into silence with threats. Danny was oddly pleased to see that this much of popular fiction got it right. They even drove off in black SUVs, just like in the movies.**

the past century. Among his encyclopedic knowledge were many about killer plants, plants that developed sentience, and similar vegetative mutants.

Faced with the scene before him, he searched his knowledge for some guidance. Nothing clicked. This creature was, he thought, something like a gritty, realistic version of some goofy old cartoon. In other words, it was a paradox, and could not be easily classified. This was no movie.

Despair overwhelmed him. This could be his moment. This could be his chance to prove that all his years mindlessly watching and re-watching old monster movies actually turned out to be useful after all. This could be his chance to be a hero.

And yet...nothing. He had no idea what to do, how to handle this. The movies hadn't taught him anything, and couldn't have prepared him for seeing such a thing in person.

But that sunflower was chasing Mrs. Rosencrantz, and she was screaming, so he figured he had to act fast.

Danny ran outside, as fast as his wobbling legs would let him. He stood on the back porch and cried out.

"Hey! Hey...flower...!" His intent was to at least come up with a cool line, like in so many of his favorite movies. This was the best he could do. He swore under his breath, and farted. His nerves were getting to him.

The flower paid him no mind. It had no ears, Danny reasoned, so maybe it couldn't hear him. Not wasting another second, Danny went barreling towards it and tackled the sunflower. He could feel the squish and crackle as its stalk smushed beneath his weight. But there was still a great deal of strength in it, which Danny hadn't really been expecting.

The sunflower and Danny rolled around, grappled, and finally the sunflower had the advantage. It shifted its knobby green knees into Danny's gut and its fists, feeling a bit like some sort of bulbous, bulging seed pods, smacked his face repeatedly. It hurt a little, but Danny was acutely aware that this was somehow more humiliating than physically painful.

## Buddha Delivers a Speech

Buddha is nervous. He is about to give a speech. Buddha hates giving speeches.

He was up all night writing it. The speech was his attempt to tell of his experiences reaching enlightenment under the tree of figs. Buddha hoped that by sharing his experiences through public speaking, he might help others to improve their lives.

Shortly before the speech was to begin, Buddha vomited in a public bathroom. Buddha hoped that this would ensure he would not vomit during the speech.

Buddha put on a clean suit and tie. He looked like a dapper gentleman.

His speech began and Buddha proved himself an eloquent writer, though a somewhat inelegant, inconstant speaker. Nonetheless, the audience listened patiently and were polite, and Buddha managed to finish his speech without any major anxiety attack or particularly embarrassing flub. When the speech had concluded, Buddha told the audience that he would now take questions.

A tall man in the front row wearing thick, black glasses raised his hand.

"Yes, you in the front," said Buddha, pointing to the man, "what would you like to know?"

"You never mentioned the part where you were crucified."

Buddha stood in a daze of confusion for a moment.

"I never was crucified."

The crowd gasped. A woman sitting in the middle, near the aisle, stood up.

"What about Pontius Pilate? Did you ever forgive him?"

"For give him for what? I wasn't crucified. I never knew Pontius Pilate. You've got me confused. You're thinking of Jesus Christ."

The crowd began talking amongst themselves. The frustration was palpable. Buddha felt like a fool.

The crowd began to boo. The man who spoke first shouted loudly "Get off the stage!"

Just when it appeared that the audience may become violent, everyone present suddenly transformed into balloons of every color and floated so far up into the sky that Buddha could no longer see them.

Buddha reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a cellular phone. He dialed his manager's number. There was an answer.

"Hello?"

"Dang it, Chuck, it happened again!"



Danny was in total disbelief that Mrs. Rosencrantz was still alive. While his own great-grandparents had faded into the mists of childhood memory, Mrs. Rosencrantz seemed to defy time.

She tended the garden in her backyard; it reminded him of the one his great-grandparents had cultivated with so much care. It died out after they did. Danny didn't know anything about gardening and hadn't the patience to learn. His backyard was crabgrass now.

Despite her age, Mrs. Rosencrantz was much more active than Danny. She often brought him groceries when he was ill, or when he was too tired or depressed to do it himself. It did little for his self-esteem to have an elderly woman seeing to his chores, but he never did object.

All of this, the current state of his life, was swirling through his mind as he stared at his reflection in the mirror. That was when he heard it. Mrs. Rosencrantz was screaming.

Danny, with uncharacteristic speed, ducked out of the tiny bathroom and looked through the back window. Mrs. Rosencrantz was running from her backyard into his, right over the field where his great-grandparents' garden used to be. Her hands were waving wildly in the air, which, Danny noted in the back of his mind, made her look a bit like a puppet.

Behind her, giving vigorous chase, was an enormous sunflower.

The sunflower's body was one long, bulky green stalk, and, to Danny's utter amazement, the stalk branched off in several key places. These extensions formed crude limbs. The sunflower's strange, spindly hands were clenched into squishy-looking fists, and its green feet showed a few thin roots hanging on. He recognized the enormous "head." It was a very large sunflower Mrs. Rosencrantz had been particularly proud of, from her own diligently-maintained garden.

Danny's passion, though it had never led to a lucrative career as he'd hoped, was movies. In particular, he loved monster movies. He knew all the stock plotlines, the tropes, the clichés, and could name more or less all of the classic horror movies of



## **Danny Gets His Ass Kicked by a Sunflower**

On the morning it happened, Danny was looking into the mirror and thinking about his life. He was now 32 years old, and that was incomprehensible to him. Every time he thought of it, he realized that, in his mind, there had been no plan to live past his 20s. It wasn't that he had expected to die young, per se. It was simply the fact that no dream of his childhood ever pictured life beyond those young adult years, years he'd expected to fill with dating, an exciting career in the entertainment industry, and a lavish house.

His reflection showed a very different future than the one he'd imagined. The once full, brown crop of hair had thinned, threatening to go completely within a few more short years. A smattering of pimples remained long after puberty, stalwart soldiers who hadn't been told the war was over.

The body that he'd imagined would be solid and muscular by now was instead "skinny fat," so disproportionate that no clothes ever fit right. That was why he was now wearing an over-sized plain sweater. It was either that or something too tight, which would show off the bulge of his belly and the thinness of his arms. At least the sweaters, he reasoned, were comfortable.

Instead of a swanky bachelor pad, Danny was standing in the tiny bathroom in the house he'd inherited from his great-grandparents. Instead of an exciting career as a movie director, or actor, or producer, or stunt man, Danny got meager checks in the mail that he used to buy ramen and donuts. Small comforts were everything to him now. He hadn't been on a date in two years. On the last one, the woman, an accountant with an apparent inability to smile, never returned from a trip to the bathroom. Her online profile was deleted by the he got home.

Danny didn't get out much. Mrs. Rosencrantz, the old lady living next door, was one of the few people he ever spoke to. She was in her late 90s and had been friends with his great-grandparents. He was shocked to find himself in his 30s, but

## **Happy Birthday**

It is your birthday. You visit the home of your best pal, only to find it filled with your friends and family; it is a surprise party!

Oh, you realize, there are so many presents, of all shapes and sizes! You can hardly wait to see what each one is.

After sharing a few obligatory laughs with the guests, it is time to begin opening your gifts.

First the big one, then the little one, then the medium-sized one. You are so overwhelmed with delight that it doesn't occur to you right away just what is happening.

You open one box to find a personalized copy of the Holy Book. You turn to thank the one who gave it to you, and, suddenly struck with embarrassment and terror, you realize that you no longer remember his name.

You say thank you without mentioning any name at all. You look to the woman who gave you the last present; you've forgotten her name too!

"What's the matter?" asks an old woman, "Don't you like your presents? Don't you want to open more?"

Yes, you say, you love them, and you will open more. You can't get away. All eyes are on you. You must keep going. But with every gift you unwrap, every present you open, you forget the name of the person who gave it to you. You forget ever having known them.

You go on, and the tension escalates. Finally, it is over. All of the presents have been opened. There they are, all laid out on the table. A book, a comb, an old tape recording, a photo album, a record, and so much more. You are standing in a room full of strangers.

You smile and bluff and continue to go along with the proceedings. You eat cake. The sweetness is sickening.

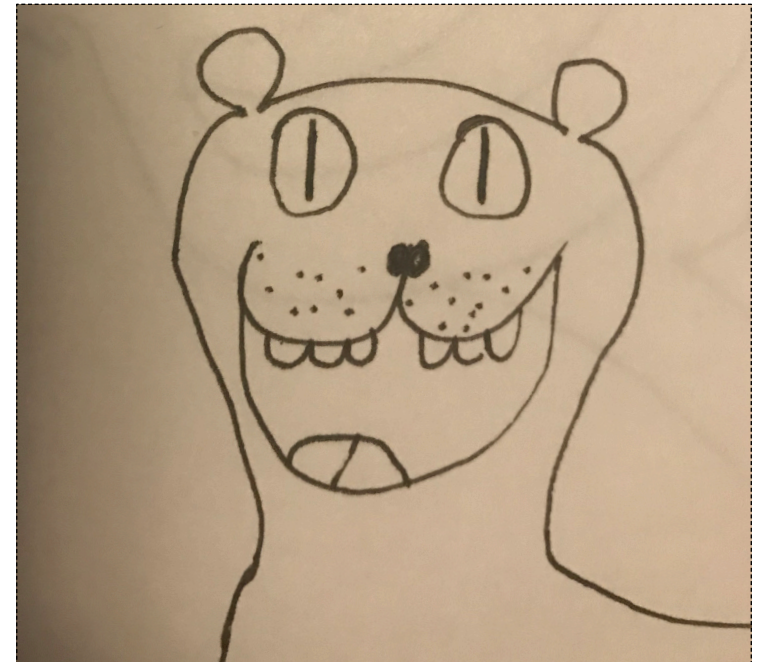
Finally, it is time to go. They help you load the gifts into the back seat of your car.

You begin driving, but something else is wrong. You panic.

You've forgotten who you are. You've forgotten where you live.

You don't know where to go.

the incidents in the city to the home of Susie's family. Susie later became a successful optometrist. She married once but following the news that she was unable to have children, her husband requested a divorce. In the spot where the fetus and the remains of the bear were buried, a small tulip grew and existed for many years (despite the climate not being conducive to such a flower) until the lot was used to build a strip mall.



Schopenhauer, but could not do so. Unable to learn anything further, it considered revealing itself to the family, as it felt a sense of trust for them. It spent the day unmoving as it weighed the options.

One the night of August 24th little Susie awoke as she was shaken awake by a foreign hand. She opened her eyes to see not her father, but a figure her father's size and wearing his business suit. The figure was her bear.

Susie became horrified and ran to her parents. At first they did not believe her claims, but soon the bear followed them into their bedroom. Susie's father grabbed a golf club and beat the bear to the ground. The blows hit the soft flesh of the bear's fabric-and-fluff body, confusing Susie's father. On the floor, the bear was motionless. Suddenly, the body began to heave, expanding and shrinking to an extreme degree, and the spine of the bear pierced the suit and the fabric-skin, and the back of the bear's body ripped open.

From out of the body came a flood of fluffy stuffing and red, human blood. Out of this emerged a naked, middle-aged man with a balding head of blond hair and a blond mustache. The man stood, uneasily, and looked at the family, with an uncomprehending expression. He continued to heave, as if he had difficulty breathing. The family looked on, silent and terrified. Susie cried.

Just as suddenly as the man had come into existence, he collapsed onto the floor and shrank into a shriveled fetus.

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The family buried the body that night and no one spoke of it again. No questions were ever asked; authorities never traced

## **An Advertisement for Hot Sauce**

An elderly, handsome Spanish gentlemen sits at a bus stop on a barren road. Surrounding him are dry, barren fields. The sky is an endless expanse of pure blue, not a cloud can be seen. The man stares off onto the opposite horizon, peacefully lost in thought. Sitting on the bench next to him is a stylish leather briefcase.

He is brought out of his gentle reverie by the sound of the bus approaching. He looks to his left and sees the shadowy outline of the bus. However, as it steadily comes closer, his placid, careless smile turns to an angry and bitter frown. The bus is in fact a giant, red hot pepper which acts like a bus, with wheels on the bottom and windows on the sides.

The pepper pulls up next to the man and stops. The door opens and over a dozen anthropomorphic peppers flood out of it. They surround the bench which the man is sitting on. They begin to shout joyfully.

**"MUY BIEN! MUY BIEN! NEW VOLCANO SAUCE IS MUY CALIENTE! ARRIBA! ARRIBA!"**

The leader of the group, a large red pepper man wearing a sombrero and sporting a stereotypical Mexican-style mustache, shakes maracas in the elderly man's face. The pepper, in a deep baritone and with a stereotypical Mexican accent, leads a song.

**"VOLCANO SAUCE, VOLCANO SAUCE**

**IS MUY CALIENTE,**

**VOLANO SAUCE, VOLCANO SAUCE**

**IS MUY EXCELENTE!**

**EAT TOO MUCH VOLCANO SAUCE  
AND YOU'LL SPOUT LAVA FROM YOUR EARS!  
IF YOU DON'T EAT ENOUGH VOLCANO SAUCE  
YOU'LL REGRET IT FOR YEARS AND YEARS!"**

Just as the chorus begins again, the elderly man, who has been suppressing an onslaught of rage, cries out:

**"STOP IT! STOP IT! NOT AGAIN! I AM TIRED OF YOU  
ADVERTISEMENTS! LAST WEEK IT WAS LAUNDRY  
DETERGENT! THE WEEK BEFORE THAT IT WAS HAIR GEL!  
THE WEEK BEFORE THAT IT WAS CONDOMS! AND NOW HOT  
SAUCE! I HATE YOU, YOU DAMNABLE VEGETABLES, I HATE  
YOU MORE THAN I CAN BEAR!"**

The pepper people ignore the man's outburst and continue to sing. The leader of the peppers shakes the maracas in the man's face in an even more obnoxious way. The man cries out again:

**"I WARNED THE LITTLE SOAP PEOPLE! ONE MORE TIME,  
AND I WOULD KILL YOU ALL! I MEANT IT! I WILL KILL EACH  
AND EVERY ONE OF YOU!"**

The elderly man then opens the stylish leather briefcase on the bench next to him and produces a small ax. Pushing a button on the base of the wand, both the wand itself and the blades extend, making it into an even more menacing weapon. Without further delay, the man stands up and slices the leader of the pepper people in half. He then reaches into the corpse and gobbles up some innards.

**"YES, VERY HOT INDEED, YOU HORRIBLE CRETINS! BUT  
YOU'RE THE ONES WHO WILL REGRET IT FOR YEARS AND  
YEARS!"**

The pepper people scream and begin running away, but their unnaturally bipedal bodies causes them to be slow, and the

different prostitute. However, on this occasion, he brought with him a pocketknife he found in the pocket of Susie's father's trousers. As this prostitute began to unbutton his pants, the bear motioned for her to sit back. When she did so, he grabbed the pocketknife and flicked it open with incredible swiftness and proceeded to slice into the woman's leg.

Unable to feel pain, the bear was simply mimicking what he had experienced the night before, as a way of experimenting. To him, it was a simple test of actions and reactions. His expectations were confused when the woman, bleeding profusely and with a limp, ran quickly from the room. The woman who cut him had run away first the last time; why, he wondered, was he not the one to run away first this time? At any rate, he once again returned home.

On the 21st of August, the bear returned to the main street, but several men were waiting to apprehend him. His antics had become the subject of fear and paranoia in the area and he was suspected of being a potential serial killer. The bear was grabbed by one man and a part of his arm was ripped off. The man screamed and retreated when he realized that no human arm was revealed inside the would-be bear costume. Before any further experimentation could be achieved, the bear, frightened, returned home.

The night of the 22nd of August the bear did not wear any clothes nor leave the house. During the day Susie had again been upset by the damage to the bear, and her mother chided her for damaging it. Nonetheless, Susie's mother repaired the arm in quick order.

As the night passed the bear considered many things. It briefly stole away to the family book shelf where it attempted to read "The World As Will and Representation" by Arthur

Inside the bear was exposed to the gyrations of many strippers, dancing upon poles. One of the strippers proceeded to give him a lap dance. She commented upon what she thought was the "interesting costume" he was "wearing," unaware that it indeed constituted his entire physical body. When the dance was finished and he did not pay, she became irate, criticized him for what she understood to be his sexual fetish for anthropomorphic animal costumes, and requested a bouncer to throw him out. The bouncer was unsettled by how light the bear was, as well as his lack of speech or screams as he was tossed roughly out the door. Several passersby snapped pictures.

Confused, quizzical and vaguely frightened, the bear returned home, replaced Susie's father's suit, and, shrinking down to his original size, returned to his original position on Susie's bed.

The following night he repeated his actions. This time, he was approached by a woman who revealed herself to be a prostitute. She took the overwhelmed and confused bear to a hotel room with whom she had a previous arrangement and attempted to pleasure him sexually. She unzipped his pants and realized that she did not know how to access his genitals through what she, too, perceived to be a "costume." Frustrated, she tore open the fabric of his crotch. When nothing but fluff was revealed inside, she screamed and fled the building. The bear escaped to his home once more.

The following morning, Susie found the damage to her bear. Crying, she brought it to her mother, who repaired it. Her mother held his arms and caused him to appear as if he was dancing around happily. This made Susie laugh.

Yet again the bear repeated his actions, this time finding a

man would not cease from slaughtering them until every last one of the singing party was lying in oozing, sauced-covered pieces on the ground. Then, the man enters the bus and finds several horrified females feeding the baby peppers with milky hot sauce from their bulging teats. The man, in a threatening voice, commands them to stay still, and amidst the screams of the women and cries of the infants, he commandeers the pepper bus.

He drives for a little over an hour before causing it to careen into a deep canyon. There were no survivors.

Meanwhile, on a space station, several human brains connected into a massive computer network share thoughts with each other at an incomprehensible speed. They consider matters of demographics, synergy, product placement, and the high costs of mass-scale genetic engineering, and ultimately decide that they needed to retool, organize a new focus group and hire a different consulting firm.



## Family Incorporated

Bobby is in his crib sucking on a teething ring. In front of the crib, the bars of which have been removed, is Bobby's desk. On his desk there is an In Box and an Out Box. The In Box is stacked high and the Out Box is empty. Through the big windows, the light of the setting sun makes the room appear red and orange and fiery. Bobby's Mommy knocks on the door.

"Honey, Auntie wants to see you."

Bobby, not yet old enough to speak, gurgles incoherently. He is barely aware of what Mommy means.

Bobby's Mommy picks him up and carries him down the big white corridor. It goes on for what seems to Bobby like miles and miles. As they go, they pass huge rooms filled with nurseries where newborn babies are set up in their brand new cubicles. The room is filled with their cries. A doctor man wearing a surgical mask attempts to scream over their voices.

"Bobby, Auntie isn't happy with you." says Bobby's Mommy. "It reflects badly on Mommy, you know. Auntie says your quarterly reports are bad. She says the report you did for the Mendelssohn account was terrible. She couldn't even read it. It made Auntie cry and then she screamed at me. She screamed at me about you."

As August wore on, the bear began to explore the house on his own every night, just after Susie fell asleep. At first he only explored Susie's room. He tried on her dresses and discovered that, somehow, he would swell in size in order to perfectly fit her garments. After Susie's room lost the sense of novelty it first had for him, the bear began exploring other rooms. In Susie's older brother's room, the bear found a different style of clothing to wear, and his size ballooned to match that of the teenager. In Susie's parents room, the bear took on the size and attire of first a full grown woman and then a full grown man. The bear liked the flow of Susie's mother's dresses, and of having breasts, but he preferred the larger, masculine frame he gained from wearing Susie's father's suits.

The bear, in time, learned to enjoy television (with the volume down low enough so as not to wake the family) and to prepare food as he saw the family do during the daytime. Having no mouth, the bear could not eat the food, so he usually wrapped it in tinfoil (mimicking the practice of Susie's mother) and hid it in the back of the refrigerator. The family members would assume these leftovers to be the work of each other and no one ever questioned anyone else about where they had come from. Most of them went untouched and spoiled. A few of them, peanut butter and jelly, were left on Susie's night stand. She ate them for breakfast. They were her favorites. No questions were asked; she assumed them to have been put there by her mother.

By mid-August the bear had thoroughly explored the house and desired more. On August 18th, the bear stole a suit from Susie's father and quietly left the house, undetected. Standing with Susie's father's imposing frame, the bear quickly and quietly traveled down various side streets and alleys before finding the city's downtown area. On a massive main street the bear discovered countless casinos, restaurants and clubs. Curious, he entered one named "Luscious."

## **The Bear is Swelling**

For her fifth birthday on the 23rd of June, Susie was given a teddy bear by her mother and father. She named the bear Mr. Hugs. Susie developed a habit of falling asleep with the bear wrapped in her arms. The bear became a source of comfort to the child.

Frequently the bear, "Mr. Hugs," would be left at random throughout the house as the family members went about their daily business. The bear gazed upon their activities with dull, lifeless, thoughtless eyes.

Yet, somehow, as the days passed, something began to change. For reasons unknown, and though it is unclear upon which exact date, the beginnings of sensory impressions formed, eventually leading to the existence of some primitive form of consciousness. The bear, though lacking any ability to interpret what he saw, was able to watch the family, hear them, smell them, and feel them for the first time. From approximately July 1st to July 15th, the bear existed within a state of pure experience and observation, not unlike a human infant trapped within an inanimate form.

Some short time later, the bear began to form memories of what he saw, and after that, gradually, began to learn from and develop opinions about his memories, observations and experiences. Sometime near the end of July, for the first time the bear began to desire experimentation and as a first act of will, the bear moved on his own. First one paw, then the other. Under cover of night, the bear taught himself to walk. This took only a brief period of three days.

**Bobby yawned. Bobby's Mommy was taken aback.**

**"Bobby! Don't you ignore me! This is serious! If you can't pull your own weight around here, we're going to have to let you go! Mommy doesn't want to lose her little Bobby-wobby."**

Finally, they arrive at the massive oak door. Bobby's Mommy knocks, and a loud voice insides beckons them in. Without a word, Bobby's Mommy places Bobby on the floor in front of Auntie's desk and shuffles out of the room, closing the door behind her. Auntie, sitting in her big leather chair and staring out through the huge windows at the fiery sunset, turns to Bobby.

**"Bobby, Bobby, Bobby..."** says Auntie, "what are we going to do with you?"

**Bobby begins to roll around on the floor and laugh.**

**"BOBBY! PAY ATTENTION!"** Bobby's Auntie is a tall, heavy, imposing woman with stern features and a perpetual frown.

**Her loud voice makes Bobby cry.**

**"NO CRYING, BOBBY! This is a BUSINESS! Our goals here are greater teamwork, more effective products, and communication but these all serve one end, the one thing that keeps this whole company together: profit. Your department is bleeding money, Bobby. You show no sign of concern nor any**

willingness to improve. You've been given your last chance. Do you understand me?!" Auntie is furious.

Bobby simply continues to cry. Now Auntie is absolutely livid.

"VERY WELL, BOBBY. YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TERMINATE YOU."

Auntie reaches inside her desk drawer for something, but before she can produce it, Bobby's Mommy rushes in.

"DON'T DO IT, MATILDA! PLEASE, DON'T DO IT!"

Bobby's Auntie produces a revolver and shoots Bobby's Mommy in the face. Bobby is crying so hard that he is about to pass out.

"Now, Bobby," says the huge, sweaty woman in an ill-fitting business suit, "look what you made me do!" She presses a button on the desk.

"Security? I need you to remove a corpse from my office, and also please escort Mr. - "

Just then, the huge windows shatter as a gigantic Bald Eagle flies into the office and grabs Auntie in his massive talons.

"I'm very sorry, Bobby," says the Eagle, "I am really, truly sorry."

With that, the Eagle flew Auntie away, far away, to some new kind of Hell, which, although certainly Hell, is exactly the one she would have chosen for herself if she had the chance.

As the Eagle disappeared into the horizon, Bobby suddenly transformed into a large, imposing man and took control of Auntie's duties and assets.

The papers, he knew, loved a good hostile takeover, and prepared for the onslaught of embarrassing, probing questions. As he ensured that his affairs were in order, he also installed his company's new product, which caused his mother's corpse to dance, much to his amusement. Contemplative, Bobby hoped in his heart that he would die before the Eagle returned for him.

